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ABSTRACT

School superintendents hold many leadership responsibilities, and much of schools' effectiveness rests on the abilities of the superintendents to meet their responsibilities. Criticisms of superintendents' training and educational background usually stem from a professor's lack of attention to a broader range of leadership theories. What professional standards should a superintendent meet? The eight standards presented are a combination of policy-maker knowledge and extensive research. The standards should serve as a foundation for the development and improvement of superintendents' preparation programs. Additionally all superintendents should hold themselves personally accountable to the eight standards. The eight standards for the superintendency are: (1) leadership and district culture; (2) policy and governance; (3) communications and community relations; (4) organizational management; (5) curriculum planning and development; (6) instructional management; (7) human resources management; and (8) values and ethics of leadership. There is a two step approach for putting the standards into operation: allow the standards to influence programs at the superintendent preparation level, and create a Standards Board to ensure the standards are being upheld by current superintendents. (KDP)

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Preface

The American Association of School Administrators is grateful to the Commission on Standards for the Superintendency and its chairman, John Hoyle, for developing this benchmark document. We also extend our thanks to a special jury of 100 leaders in education, business, government, and other walks of life who provided suggestions considered in shaping these standards.

These Professional Standards for the Superintendency are sure to influence the ongoing efforts of practicing school administrators, the content of university courses, the substance and accreditation of professional development and university preparation programs, the certification of superintendents, and the selection and evaluation of top school executives. They may even be considered in developing a future national professional certification program.

The standards are based on reviews of significant research and in-depth discussions with those who serve as superintendents, those who prepare superintendents for their professional responsibilities, and those in society who depend on an educated citizenry.

Over the years, these standards will surely be modified to meet the needs of a changing society. They are dynamic, not static.

A sound system of education is essential to the very future of our free and democratic society. School superintendents provide leadership and inspiration for that institution in school districts across the nation. Our children deserve no less than the most effective leadership. These standards are designed to ensure excellence in the American school superintendency.

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Introduction

To a great extent, the quality of America's schools depends on the effectiveness of school superintendents. These executives of our nation's schools have complex leadership responsibilities, and those who hold the position must be among the brightest and best our society has to offer. Their vision and performance must focus on creating schools that will inspire our children to become successful, caring Americans, capable of becoming contributing citizens of the world.

The superintendency requires bold, creative, energetic, and visionary school leaders who can respond quickly to a myriad of issues ranging from dealing with social changes, diverse student populations, and demands for equity, to improving school quality for every child and making effective use of new technologies.

The New School Leader

Recent research on the superintendency makes one point amply clear—top-down bureaucratic management is being replaced by bottom-up executive leadership that encourages shared decision making among school staff, community, business, and other stakeholders. Superintendents must be skilled collaborators who can rally all available resources to support better education for all children living in our multicultural society.

The 1992 AASA *Study of the American School Superintendency,* based on an extensive nationwide survey, found that superintendents in larger school districts consider their jobs fairly similar to those held by CEOs in the private sector.

Both executive offices require many of the same management and executive skills to meet the complex issues of large budgets, personnel, product accountability, and competition. However, most superintendents are not in urban or suburban schools— far from it. Two-thirds of the current 13,800 superintendents reside and work in small or rural districts with fewer than 3,000 students. While many of the challenges and problems these small school leaders face are similar to those faced by their big-city colleagues, many others are different.

Personal traits. On the average, most of the 13,800 superintendents are white males in their late forties to early fifties; an exception is a small but growing number of women and minorities, usually found in urban or high-minority-population school districts.

Preparation and training

In spite of variances in their leadership roles and responsibilities, all superintendents are prepared and certified in similar ways. To be eligible for a certificate from a state department of education, they are required to hold a master's degree in educational administration and to have taken some additional courses. The course work of all aspiring superintendents is strikingly similar. The internship experiences, however, vary widely depending on the university and how convenient it is for the student to complete the required clinical hours.

Corporate takeover? A recent development is the entry of noncertified business people into the superintendency who have been selected by boards of education through alternative procedures that often reflect different standards of preparation and experience. This tendency by a few to ignore candidates with education backgrounds in favor of people from business raises serious questions about the talent pool and the preparation of some who follow the traditional career path toward the superintendency. The traditional path is well traveled each year by more than 10,000

students in more than 300 higher education graduate programs, who seek to become superintendents.

Window of opportunity

The opportunity to become a chief school executive will increase during the 1990s and beyond. Surveys reveal that more than 50 percent of the 13,800 superintendents plan to retire during the next ten years. These retirements will mean a loss of talent and experience in districts across America, but the openings will offer greater professional advancement possibilities for young, eager, and sometimes better-trained people who aspire to the job, including women and minorities.

Will these aspirants be better prepared for their jobs as superintendents? Will preparation programs and related certification requirements improve enough in time to produce the new type of school executive needed to lead school districts into the 21st century?

These and other questions are being raised about how to prepare these leaders for the complex challenges ahead. Traditional university and state certification programs have been the target of criticism because of their perceived lack of focus on the future roles, knowledge, and skill base necessary for superintendents. This criticism comes from policymakers, corporate leaders, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, and superintendents themselves who question the preparation they received.

New needs for the future

Much of the criticism directed toward superintendent preparation is philosophical. Critics point out that traditional college and university preparation programs are teaching outdated styles of leadership and management that stress control, order, quality, and efficiency. While reform efforts in superintendent preparation have led to greater emphasis on team building, shared leadership, collaboration, and instructional improvement, the older or outdated image persists in the eyes of many close observers. Critics wonder why professors pay little attention to critical theory, chaos theory, feminist critique, and other current scientific and social issues influencing organizational and educational thought. Too much lecturing, at the expense of problem-based and field-based learning, is another concern of superintendent preparation critics.

The Commission believes it is important to teach emerging ideas about values, choice, and collaboration in order to prepare and develop superintendents. The responsibility for this teaching must be shared by a consortium of all groups with a legitimate stake in the career development of superintendents.

While 75 percent of superintendents surveyed by AASA in the early '90s were generally satisfied with their preparation, the signs of discontent were growing clearer. Younger superintendents complained about overlapping, fragmented course work and the need for more extensive field-based training and monitoring programs to help them prepare for the real world of the superintendency.

Some superintendents appreciated the outstanding learning experiences they gained from some professors. Some praised their mentor superintendents who shared their world with them during an internship. Others claimed that the course work was all outdated theory and excluded current "hot topics" such as total quality management, strategic planning, site-based management, new instructional strategies, or curriculum auditing and assessment.

Another complaint was the inconsistent and random placement of future superintendents in internships. Scholars and practicing school superintendents concluded that preparation programs need to center on applied knowledge and skill development as well as on relevant theory and

emerging research on school leadership and shared decision making.

Development of Professional Standards

An important method for ensuring that talented people become superintendents is the development and application of professional standards. Professional standards, when coupled with professional development requirements and a means of gauging quality performance, create a sense at all levels that superintendents are responsible executives worthy of the public trust. An aura of professionalism is essential to sound relationships with boards of education, parents, and the general community. The American Association of School Administrators, founded in 1865, has a responsibility to create these standards.

In 1982, AASA published "Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators," which summarized recommendations of two AASA working committees composed of both superintendents and professors of educational administration. The "Guidelines" suggested performance goals, competencies, skills, and delivery systems for the preparation of school administrators.

Since that time, AASA has cosponsored a number of research studies exploring key performance areas of the superintendency, and has validated the skills and competencies suggested in those 1982 guidelines. In 1985, AASA published *Skills for Successful School Leaders* by John R. Hoyle, Fenwick English, and Betty Steffy. The second edition (1990) presents an account of the impact of continuing work on certification and graduate programs in colleges and universities.

The AASA Commission on Standards for the Superintendency has concluded that the time is right to develop a set of performance standards for the superintendency. The standards consolidate the knowledge base of educational administration with recent research on performance goals, competencies, and skills needed by effective superintendents. All superintendents should be held accountable for the eight professional standards, which logically follow the eight performance goals contained in "Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators." In addition, the performance standards should serve as the voice of the superintendency to professors preparing and training aspiring superintendents. State certification agencies, national and regional accrediting organizations, professional associations, and other groups who have a legitimate stake in the preparation and development of superintendents also should focus on these standards.

Consulting the stakeholders

The Commission has developed these standards with input from multiple stakeholders. The document was reviewed by a national "Jury of 100," composed of "Education Governors," business executives, training officers for corporations, national and state educational agency officials, superintendents, professors, principals, and classroom teachers. Comment was sought from members of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, the University Council for Educational Administration, and finally, the AASA Executive Committee. These standards were not developed by one or two individuals or even by several committees.

Standards for the superintendency should provide a foundation for the formation and improvement of professional development programs, including those of the National Academy for School Executives, state administrator academies, and the 300 programs located in institutions of higher education that prepare superintendents for state certification. These standards will change as the realities of the world of public education affect the role of the superintendent. However, they should be considered as an operational benchmark for the preparation and appraisal of superintendents.

General Professional Standards for the Superintendency

Effective superintendents should meet and be able to demonstrate identified competencies and skills related to each of the eight standards. These standards, grounded in the AASA guidelines, have been validated through extensive research and collaboration with superintendent practitioners, professors of educational administration, researchers, and other educational professionals. The knowledge and skill areas of each standard lend themselves to performance data that can be gathered from seminars, simulations, case studies, and other classroom or field-based learning methods.

Standard 1: Leadership and District Culture. Demonstrate executive leadership by developing a collective district vision; shape school culture and climate; provide purpose and direction for individuals and groups; demonstrate an understanding of international issues affecting education; formulate strategic plans, goals, and change efforts with staff and community; set priorities in the context of community, student and staff needs; serve as an articulate spokesperson for the welfare of all students in a multicultural context.

Indicators. A superintendent should know and be able to:

- Formulate a written vision statement of future direction for the district.
- Demonstrate an awareness of international issues affecting schools and students.
- Promote academic rigor and excellence for staff and students.

- Maintain personal, physical, and emotional wellness.
- Empower others to reach high levels of performance.
- Build self-esteem in staff and students.
- Exhibit creative problem solving.
- Promote and model risk taking.
- Respect and encourage diversity among people and programs.
- Manage time effectively.
- Facilitate comparative planning between constituencies.
- Conduct district school climate assessments.
- Exhibit multicultural and ethnic understanding.
- Promote the value of understanding and celebrating school/community cultures.

Standard 2: Policy and Governance. Develop procedures for working with the board of education that define mutual expectations, working relationships and strategies for formulating district policy for external and internal programs; adjust local policy to state and federal requirements and constitutional provisions, standards and regulatory applications; recognize and apply standards involving civil and criminal liabilities.

Indicators. A superintendent should know and be able to:

- Describe the system of public school governance in our democracy.
- Describe procedures for superintendent-board of education interpersonal and working relationships.
- Formulate a district policy for external and internal programs.
- Relate local policy to state and federal regulations and requirements.
- Describe procedures to avoid civil and criminal liabilities.

Standard 3: Communications and Community Relations. Articulate district purpose and priorities to the community and mass media; request and respond to community feedback; and demonstrate consensus building and conflict mediation. Identify, track, and deal with issues. Formulate and carry out plans for internal and external communications. Exhibit an understanding of school districts as political systems by applying communication skills to strengthen community support; align constituencies in support of district priorities; build coalitions to gain financial and programmatic support; formulate democratic strategies for referenda; relate political initiatives to the welfare of children.

Indicators. A superintendent should know and be able to:

- Articulate district vision, mission, and priorities to the community and mass media.
- Demonstrate an understanding of political theory and skills needed to build community support for district priorities.
- Understand and be able to communicate with all cultural groups in the community.
- Demonstrate that good judgment and actions communicate as well as words.
- Develop formal and informal techniques to gain external perception of a district by means of surveys, advisory groups, and personal contact.
- Communicate and project an articulate position for education.
- Write and speak clearly and forcefully.
- Demonstrate formal and informal listening skills.
- Demonstrate group membership and leadership skills.
- Identify the political forces in a community.
- Identify the political context of the community environment.
- Formulate strategies for passing referenda.
- Persuade the community to adopt an initiative for the welfare of students.
- Demonstrate conflict mediation.
- Demonstrate consensus building.
- Demonstrate school/community relations, school business partnerships, and related public service activities.
- Identify, track, and deal with issues.
- Develop and carry out internal and external communication plans.

Standard 4: Organizational Management. Exhibit an understanding of the school district as a system by defining processes for gathering, analyzing, and using data for decision making; manage the data flow; frame and solve problems; frame, develop priorities, and formulate solutions; assist others to form reasoned opinions; reach logical conclusions and make quality decisions to meet internal and external customer expectations; plan and schedule personal and organization work; establish procedures to regulate activities and projects; delegate and empower at appropriate organizational levels; secure and allocate human and material resources; develop and manage the district budget; maintain accurate fiscal records.

Indicators. A superintendent should know and be able to:

- Define processes for gathering, ana-

lyzing, and using data for informed decision making.

- Demonstrate a problem-framing process.
- Define the major components of quality management.
- Develop, implement, and monitor change processes to build capacities to serve clients.
- Discuss legal concepts, regulations, and codes for school operations.
- Describe the process of delegating responsibility for decision making.
- Develop a process for maintaining accurate fiscal reporting.
- Acquire, allocate, and manage human, material, and financial resources to effectively and accountably ensure successful student learning.
- Use technological applications to enhance administration of business and support systems.
- Demonstrate financial forecasting, planning, and cash flow management.
- Perform budget planning, management, account auditing, and monitoring.
- Demonstrate a grasp of practices in administering auxiliary programs, such as maintenance, facilities, food services, etc.
- Demonstrate planning and scheduling of personal time and organization work.

Standard 5: Curriculum Planning and Development. Design curriculum and a strategic plan that enhance teaching and learning in multiple contexts; provide planning and future methods to anticipate occupational trends and their educational implications; identify taxonomies of instructional objectives and validation procedures for curricular units, using theories of cognitive development; align and sequence curriculum; use valid and reliable performance indicators and testing procedures to measure performance outcomes; and describe the proper use of computers and other learning and information technologies.

Indicators. A superintendent should know and be able to:

- Develop core curriculum design and delivery systems for diverse school communities.
- Describe curriculum planning/futures methods to anticipate occupational trends and their educational implication for lifelong learners.
- Demonstrate an understanding of instructional taxonomies, goals, objectives, and processes.
- Describe cognitive development and learning theories and their importance to the sequencing of instruction.
- Demonstrate an understanding of

child and adolescent growth and development.

- Describe a process to create developmentally appropriate curriculum and instructional practices for all children and adolescents.
- Demonstrate the use of computers and other technologies in educational programming.
- Conduct assessments of present and future student learning needs.
- Develop a process for faculty input in continued and systematic renewal of the curriculum to ensure appropriate scope, sequence, and content.
- Demonstrate an understanding of curricular alignment to ensure improved student performance and higher order thinking.

Standard 6: Instructional Management. Exhibit knowledge of instructional management by implementing a system that includes research findings on learning and instructional strategies, instructional time, advanced electronic technologies, and resources to maximize student outcomes; describe and apply research and best practice on integrating curriculum and resources for multicultural sensitivity and assessment strategies to help all students achieve at high levels.

Indicators. A superintendent should know and be able to:

- Develop, implement, and monitor change processes to improve student learning, adult development, and climates for learning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of motivation in the instructional process.
- Describe classroom management theories and techniques.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the development of the total student, including the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic needs.
- Formulate a plan to assess appropriate teaching methods and strategies for all learners.
- Analyze available instructional resources and assign them in the most cost-effective and equitable manner to enhance student outcomes.
- Describe instructional strategies that include the role of multicultural sensitivity and learning styles.
- Exhibit applications of computer technology connected to instructional programs.
- Describe alternative methods of monitoring and evaluating student achievement based on objectives and learning outcomes.
- Describe how to interpret and use testing/assessment results to improve education.
- Demonstrate knowledge of research

findings on the use of a variety of instructional strategies.
- Describe a student achievement monitoring and reporting system.

Standard 7: Human Resources Management. Develop a staff evaluation and development system to improve the performance of all staff members; select appropriate models for supervision based on adult motivation research; identify alternative employee benefits packages; and describe and apply the legal requirements for personnel selection, development, retention, and dismissal.

Indicators. A superintendent should know and be able to:
- Develop a plan to assess system and staff needs to identify areas for concentrated staff development.
- Demonstrate knowledge of adult learning theory and motivation.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of comprehensive staff development programming to determine its effect on professional performance.
- Demonstrate use of system and staff evaluation data for personnel policy and decision making.
- Diagnose and improve organizational health/morale.
- Demonstrate personnel management strategies.
- Understand alternative benefit packages.
- Assess individual and institutional sources of stress and develop methods for reducing stress (e.g., counseling, exercise programs, and diet).
- Demonstrate knowledge of pupil personnel services and categorical programs.

Standard 8: Values and Ethics of Leadership. Understand and model appropriate value systems, ethics, and moral leadership; know the role of education in a democratic society; exhibit multicultural and ethnic understanding and related behavior; adapt educational programming to the needs of diverse constituencies; balance complex community demands in the best interest of the student; scan and monitor the environment for opportunities for staff and students; respond in an ethical and skillful way to the electronic and printed news media; and coordinate social agencies and human services to help each student grow and develop as a caring, informed citizen.

Indicators. A superintendent should know and be able to:
- Exhibit multicultural and ethnic understanding and sensitivity.
- Describe the role of schooling in a

democratic society.

- Demonstrate ethical and personal integrity.
- Model accepted moral and ethical standards in all interactions.
- Describe a strategy to promote the value that moral and ethical practices are established and practiced in each classroom and school.
  free and democratic society.
- Describe how education undergirds a Describe a strategy to ensure that diversity of religion, ethnicity, and way of life in the district are not violated.
- Formulate a plan to coordinate social, health, and other community agencies to support each child in the district.

Integrating, Implementing, and Measuring the Standards

The Commission realizes that few if any aspiring or practicing superintendents will develop complete mastery of all eight of these standards. In reality, the standards should be used as a guide for ongoing professional development for anyone preparing for or currently holding a superintendency or other central office position.

While each standard calls for specialized knowledge and skills, some overlap naturally exists. Therefore, universities, state agencies, local districts, professional associations, centers, academies, study councils, and others who are engaged in the preparation and career development of superintendents should encourage scholarly integration and application of the concepts contained in each of the standards.

Putting Them into Practice

Superintendents should be able to demonstrate a scholarly grasp of the eight standards and the more specific competencies and skills that accompany each of them.

The Commission recommends a two-step approach in putting these standards into operation:

- First, these standards should influence preparation programs at universities and professional/career development programs offered by other groups.
- Second, a Standards Board might be appointed to establish these standards as a set of credentials practicing superintendents may elect to acquire. Showing proof that the standards have been mastered could involve a rigorous examination and presentation of a portfolio of performance materials.

Mark of excellence

If these two steps are taken, local school boards might eventually require a candidate for the superintendency to have completed a Standards Board examination. Local school boards also might use the standards as a basis for appraisals and for providing professional development opportunities. In short, these standards might even help remove some of the mystery that exists about the evaluation and professional growth of school executives.

Granted, school district size, location, and philosophy must be considered in determining the extent to which all eight standards are stressed. However, the standards should serve as a valuable guide for the preparation and professional development of superintendents rather than as a checklist for terminating superintendents' contracts.

AASA Board Approved status would serve as a hallmark of excellence. Gaining this status would say to the world that a superintendent has voluntarily participated in the program and has demonstrated his or her professional competency in knowledge, skills, and actual performance in the field.

Honoring programs. Approved status also could be awarded to preparation programs at institutions that demonstrate they provide effective learning experiences connected to these standards. These institutions might be asked to submit portfolios describing program content, delivery, and assessment. Descriptions and external evaluations of clinical experiences, field-based problem solving, cohort teaching, mentoring, and coaching could add further strength to the process of granting approved status to preparation programs.

In addition to influencing preparation and career development plans, these standards also are likely to affect state certification requirements. What is most important is that they ultimately will lead to even better leadership for our nation's schools.

Conclusion

Superintendents are dream builders for America's children. That is just one reason why the superintendency is so important.

To build those dreams and help students realize them requires outstanding school and community leadership. That leadership is only possible with the very best preparation, career development, and certification programs for top school executives. Those programs should be based on sound standards.

These standards, developed by the AASA Commission and reviewed by the Jury of 100, are based on years of research. They help describe what outstanding superintendents will need to know and be able to do as we move toward and into the new millennium.

Demographics, family structure, technologies, and community expectations continue to change. That means school superintendents will have to be flexible, creative, and visionary risk takers who constantly keep the interests of each child at the very top of the agenda.

The Commission believes a much stronger emphasis will be needed in areas of executive leadership such as finance, technology, communications, and other skills to help superintendents become change agents for systemic improvement. A collaborative leadership style will be basic to dealing with a growing trend toward school-based management and decision making as school districts become increasingly decentralized and local schools become more autonomous.

At the same time, superintendents must demonstrate an understanding of international developments that affect schools and students.

Building on a firm foundation

All of these skills and bodies of knowledge must rest on a firm ethical foundation. School executives teach students and communities through their example. What they do and what they say influences the moral, physical, and intellectual development of both students and the community at large.

The Commission further believes these standards will become benchmarks for the preparation and professional development of superintendents and will help them in their monumental efforts to shape our nation's schools to meet America's current and future needs. To create new generations of schools, superintendents must be better prepared than ever before.

University superintendency preparation programs, state certification offices, and others engaged in the preparation and professional development of top school executives should adopt these standards. Doing so will:

- Improve the effectiveness of superintendents and enhance public confidence in their ability to lead our schools.
- Help attract needed resources for many preparation programs that currently are underfunded and understaffed.
- Assist universities, state education departments, and school boards in monitoring the quality of those who enter university programs, seek certification, and ultimately become school superintendents.

While these standards surely will be debated, and in time, changed, their adoption is urgent. To prolong the establishment of these standards is to threaten the possibility of even better schooling for all of our children.

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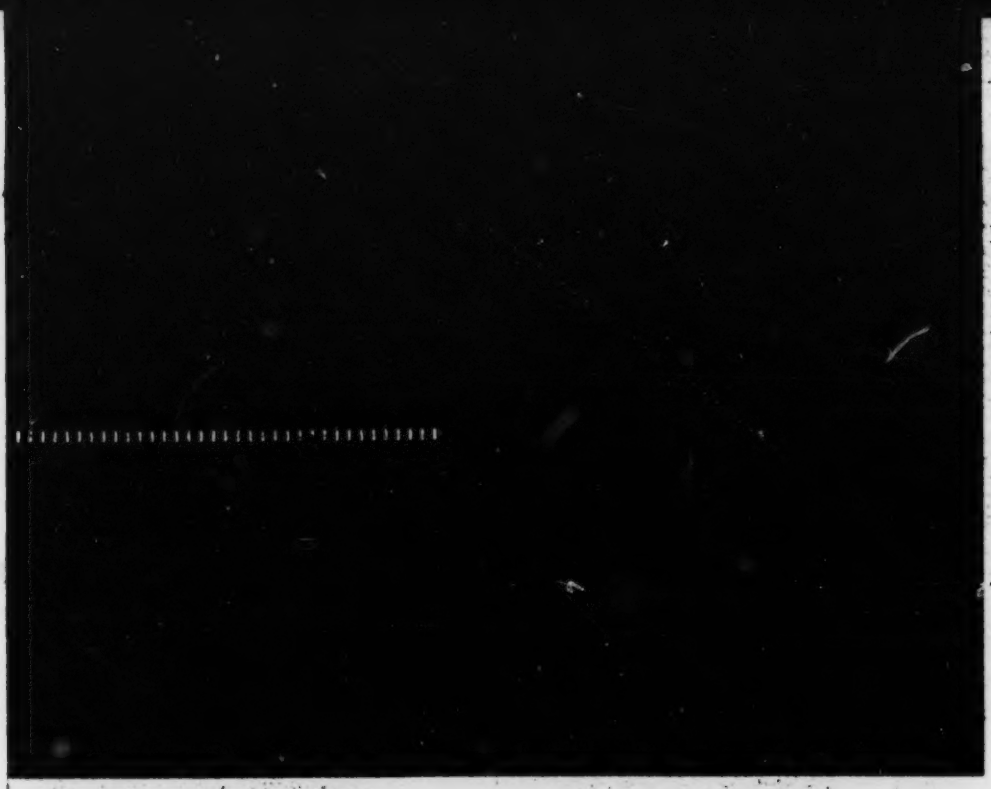

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